



COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVES

The comparison table focuses on the key differences among the alternatives.

Descriptor	Alternative 1 – No Action 2001 Roadless Rule	Alternative 2 – Proposed Action Colorado Roadless Rule	Alternative 3 – Forest Plans
Overview			
Promulgation of a state-specific rule for managing roadless areas	A state-specific rule may be promulgated for Colorado. Management of roadless areas on National Forest System (NFS) lands in Colorado would be governed by provisions of the current 2001 Roadless Rule and by any additional limitations imposed by forest plans.	A state-specific rule would be promulgated for Colorado. Management of roadless areas on National Forest System (NFS) lands in Colorado would be governed by provisions of the Colorado Roadless Rule and by any additional limitations imposed by forest plans.	A state-specific rule would be promulgated for Colorado. Management of roadless areas on National Forest System (NFS) lands in Colorado would be governed exclusively by the applicable management direction in forest plans.
Roadless areas	4.25 million acres of inventoried roadless areas (IRAs) established by the 2001 Roadless Rule, excluding 184,000 acres of wilderness and other congressionally designated acres. Acres identified by forests with roadless characteristics that are outside IRAs remain subject to forest plan direction (~309,000 acres).	4.03 million acres of Colorado roadless areas (CRAs) that update the IRAs by excluding 184,000 acres of wilderness and other congressionally designated acres; removing 8,200 acres of allocated ski areas; removing 520,800 substantially altered areas and mapping errors; and adding 309,000 acres of unroaded lands meeting roadless area criteria.	Same 4.25 million acres of IRAs as in alternative 1, excluding 184,000 acres of wilderness and other congressionally designated acres. The IRAs adopted into 2001 Roadless Rule are the same as those used in each of the current forest plans. Acres identified by forests with roadless characteristics that are outside IRAs remain so (~309,000 acres).



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Features Common to All Alternatives			
Forest plans	<p>The analysis of alternatives in this EIS is predicated on forest plan direction at the time of the analysis, recognizing that forest plans are subject to change over time and that several plans are currently undergoing revision.</p> <p>Activities in roadless areas must adhere to forest plan direction where it is more restrictive than the roadless rule. Numerous forest plan requirements would impose additional limitations on activities in roadless areas beyond the roadless rule prohibitions.</p>		
Reserved and outstanding rights	<p>Alternatives allow road construction, tree-cutting and other activities in roadless areas associated with rights allowed by existing laws or treaties. This includes allowing road access, surface occupancy, and use of NFS land in roadless areas for purposes of accessing: private lands within or adjacent to NFS land; NFS lands for exploration and development of valid claims of locatable minerals; NFS lands for American Indian land uses; NFS lands to conduct a response action under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA); and NFS lands for a Federal Aid Highway project.</p>		
Existing authorizations	<p>Alternatives allow road construction, tree-cutting, and other activities in roadless areas associated with valid written authorizations issued by the Secretary of Agriculture or designated Forest Service official. These include authorizations granted by permits, contracts, or leases.</p>		



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Features that Differ Between Alternatives—Road Construction and Reconstruction			
General road provisions	Generally prohibits road construction or reconstruction in IRAs. Does not distinguish between temporary and forest roads.	Generally prohibits road construction or reconstruction in CRAs, distinguishing between forest and temporary roads.	Forest plans include some IRAs where roads are generally prohibited. Some forest plan direction distinguishes between temporary and forest roads and provides other road-construction direction to protect resource values.
Specific road provisions	Follow NEPA requirement for level of environmental analysis. Follow agency policy for road decommissioning and road closures.	Requires preparation of an EIS to analyze proposals for forest roads in CRAs and evaluation of no-road and temporary-road alternatives. Environmental analysis for temporary roads must include a no-road alternative. Includes specific provisions about decommissioning temporary roads. Roads constructed in CRAs will be closed to motorized use except when used for the purpose of the road (including OHVs), administrative and emergency use.	Follow NEPA requirement for level of environmental analysis. Follow agency policy for road decommissioning and road closures.



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Roads in ski areas	Road construction or reconstruction is limited to within ski area permit boundaries established prior to January 2001 (~3,200 acres). Ski areas and allocations currently within IRAs remain inside IRAs (~8,200 acres).	Existing ski areas are excluded from CRAs (~8,200 acres). Ski areas remain subject to forest plan direction.	Same as alternative 2, except ski areas remain inside IRAs.
Roads in substantially altered lands (~520,800 acres)	Road construction or reconstruction on substantially altered lands in inventoried roadless areas (IRAs) is prohibited. These areas are within the IRAs. Existing roads can be used and maintained.	These areas are excluded from Colorado Roadless areas (CRAs). Management is subject to forest plan direction.	Same as alternative 2, except these areas are within the inventoried roadless areas (IRAs).
Roads for public safety and resource protections	Road construction or reconstruction is allowed in IRAs where needed to: Prevent irreparable resource damage. Address road safety hazards. Protect public from imminent threat of flood, fire, and other catastrophic events that may cause loss of life or property.	Similar to alternative 1, except these roads are temporary and constructed as needed for public health and safety in cases of threat of flood, fire, and catastrophic events that may cause loss of life or property.	Same as alternative 1, per agency regulations and policy directives.



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Roads for leasable minerals operations (e.g., oil and gas)	Road construction or reconstruction in IRAs related to leasable mineral exploration and development is limited to areas under an existing lease (issued prior to January 2001) where stipulations allow.	Road construction or reconstruction related to leasable mineral exploration and development in CRAs is limited to areas under an existing lease (issued prior to effective date of Colorado Rule) where stipulations allow. Roads are temporary or long-term temporary roads. Roads are closed to the public.	Leasing stipulations from forest plans as well as oil and gas leasing decisions may constrain surface occupancy and use in IRAs to protect resources and include reclamation requirements and other resource protection measures. Some forest plans identify IRAs not available for leasing.
Roads for leasable coal operations	Road construction or reconstruction in IRAs for coal exploration and development are limited to areas under lease prior to January 12, 2001.	Road construction or reconstruction in CRAs is allowed for coal exploration and development, but only within the North Fork coal mining area. Those same roads constructed for coal-related activities may be utilized for methane gas capture in the North Fork coal mining area where authorized under a gas lease. Roads are temporary or long-term temporary roads and closed to the public.	Same as Alternative 2; no rule-related limitations. Current forest plan direction does not limit road construction in areas where coal resources occur. Forest plans include management direction for areas where coal resources exist to protect sensitive surface resources.



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Roads for utility and water facilities	Road construction or reconstruction related to utility and water conveyances is limited in IRAs to areas under an existing permit (issued prior to January 2001).	Road construction or reconstruction related to utility and water conveyances is allowed in support of existing as well as future permits other than where forest plan direction prohibits roading. Utilities are defined as existing and future powerlines. Water conveyances are defined as existing and future diversion structures, headgates, pipelines, ditches, canals, and tunnels.	Road construction activities in IRAs would be governed by forest plan direction. Forest plan direction includes areas where roading is prohibited, limited, discouraged, or unrestricted.
Roads for reducing wildfire hazards or large insect-disease outbreaks	Road construction or reconstruction for reducing wildfire hazard or insect-disease outbreaks is prohibited.	Road construction or reconstruction is allowed where needed to reduce wildfire hazard or insect-disease outbreaks in areas covered by a community wildfire protection plan or in a wildland urban interface. Temporary roads only.	Road construction activities in IRAs would be governed by forest plan direction. Forest plan direction includes areas where roading is prohibited, limited, discouraged, or unrestricted.



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Features that Differ Between Alternatives—Tree-cutting, Sale, or Removal			
General tree-cutting, sale, and removal provisions	Tree-cutting, sale, or removal (also called timber harvest in this Rule) is generally prohibited in roadless areas, with some exceptions. In many IRAs, forest plans add more restrictions related to conducting this activity, to protect other resource values.	Same as alternative 1, although there are more exceptions under this alternative (see below).	Forest plans include some IRAs where tree-cutting is prohibited, and provides other direction for tree cutting and removal to protect resource values. Forest plans in Colorado generally allow tree-cutting for non-timber purposes on any NFS lands, subject to specific resource management direction. Forest plans also identify lands suitable for timber harvest for timber production purposes.
Tree-cutting, sale, or removal for incidental, personal, administrative uses	This activity is allowed in IRAs where incidental to other management activities or for personal or administrative uses.	Same as alternative 1.	Same as alternatives 1 and 2, per agency regulation and policies.
Tree-cutting, sale, or removal in substantially altered areas	This activity is not rule-limited in substantially altered areas in IRAs.	Same as alternative 1, although these areas are outside CRAs and are governed by the applicable management direction in forest plans.	The areas are governed by the applicable management direction in forest plans.



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Tree-cutting, sale, or removal for habitat improvement	<p>This activity is allowed in IRAs to improve habitat for threatened, endangered, proposed, or sensitive species, and to maintain or improve roadless characteristics.</p> <p>Limited to generally small-diameter trees.</p>	<p>Similar to alternative 1, except expands this exception to allow tree-cutting in CRAs to improve habitat for all wildlife and plant species.</p> <p>Not limited to generally small-diameter trees.</p>	<p>Similar to alternative 2, forest plans generally allow tree-cutting in IRAs to improve wildlife and plant habitat.</p>
Tree-cutting, sale, or removal to reduce wildfire hazard and insect-disease outbreaks	<p>This activity is allowed in IRAs to maintain or restore ecosystem composition and structure, such as to reduce the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire effects within the range of variability expected to occur under natural disturbance regimes to maintain or improve roadless characteristics.</p> <p>Limited to generally small-diameter trees and precludes associated road construction.</p>	<p>Similar to alternative 1, except the activity is specific to the need to reduce wildfire hazard and large insect and disease outbreaks, within areas covered by a community wildfire protection plan or in a wildland-urban interface.</p> <p>Not limited to generally small-diameter trees and does not preclude associated road construction.</p>	<p>Forest plans allow tree-cutting in most IRAs for purposes described in alternatives 1 or 2, with exceptions in some specific management areas.</p> <p>Not limited to generally small-diameter trees, and does not preclude associated road construction.</p>



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Other Requirements for Management of Roadless Areas in Colorado			
Oil and gas pipelines	No prohibition on oil or gas pipelines through IRAs from sources outside IRAs.	Prohibits construction of oil and gas pipelines through CRAs from sources located exclusively outside the CRAs.	No prohibition on oil or gas pipelines through IRAs from sources outside IRAs.
Cooperating agency status	No specific provisions for granting cooperating agency status. The responsible official would continue to make this decision on a case-by-case basis, pursuant to NEPA regulations.	Upon request, the Forest Service will grant cooperating agency status to the State of Colorado for planning all activities proposed within CRAs, as well as activities proposed in the ski areas excluded from the CRAs, where the Forest Service has jurisdiction to grant such status.	Same as alternative 1.